

Claims:

- 1-9. Canceled.
10. (Currently amended) A pouring shroud for the casting of a liquid metal, comprising a base body made from a refractory material, said body comprising an outer surface and an inner surface defining a pouring channel for the casting of the liquid metal, wherein at least a part of the ~~element~~ inner surface is coated with an insulating coating comprising insulating hollow microspheres, preferably in an amount comprised between 5 and 40 weight % and forming, at the metal liquid contact, a gas impermeable layer, and wherein the pouring shroud is suitable for use prior to being preheated.
11. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 10, wherein the coating comprises 20 to 80 weight % of a ceramic matrix.
12. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 11, wherein the ceramic matrix comprises silica or alumina.
13. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 12, wherein the ceramic matrix comprises vitreous grains.
14. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 13, wherein the vitreous grains comprise atomized silica.
15. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 10, wherein the thickness of the coating is between 1 and 10 mm.
16. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 10, wherein the impermeable layer and the refractory material are interpenetrated.

17. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 10, wherein the base body is constituted from a carbon bonded material.
18. Canceled.
19. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 10, wherein at least a part of the external surface is coated with an insulating coating comprising insulating microspheres.
20. (Previously presented) A pouring shroud according to claim 19, wherein the insulating microspheres comprise between 5 and 40 weight % of the insulating coating.
21. (Previously presented) A method of coating a pouring shroud comprising a base body made from a refractory material, said body comprising an outer surface and an inner surface defining a pouring channel for the casting of the liquid metal, comprising the steps of preparing a slip comprising insulating hollow microspheres, drying the slip at room temperature, preferably for at least two hours, and forming a gas impermeable layer from the dried slip by contacting the dried slip with liquid metal.